

## JUVENILE URBAN-HACKED PEREGRINE FALCONS (*Falco peregrinus*) HUNT AT NIGHT

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Although Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) are considered diurnal raptors, they have taken bats in the dim light of dawn and dusk (Stager 1941, Ratcliffe 1980). Beebe (1960) reported that Peale's peregrines (*F. p. pealei*) hunted nocturnal seabirds "so late in the evening, or so early in the morning, as to be almost nocturnal." Nelson (1970) found that peregrines nesting in murrelet colonies did not hunt during the day until most of the murrelets had moved offshore. Here we report nocturnal hunting by young peregrines released in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1987.

We released 14 captive-produced peregrines by hacking, described by Sherrod et al. (1982). The release site was on the top-floor ledge of the First Wisconsin Center, 178 m above street level. We colormarked the falcons with fluorescent paint and released five of them on 27 July, five on 6 August, and four on 9 August. We watched them from the "411 Building" located two blocks west, arriving each morning before first light and staying until dark.

We fed the falcons by tying Coturnix Quail (*Coturnix* spp.) to two hack boards: one board was attached to the hack box and the other to the roof of the 12-story Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Building (NML) across the street and to the north. Every evening, after dark (about 2030-2100 H) from 27 July through the end of September, we removed the uneaten food and tied enough fresh quail to the boards to ensure that each falcon could eat its fill the next day. The falcons first started catching large, flying insects (i.e., dragonflies, butterflies) on 7 August and birds on 27 August. We saw them hunting downtown and along the shore of Lake Michigan, which is about four blocks east of the release site.

Several things suggested that the young peregrines were active at night. We often heard them calling as they flew past while it was still too dark for us to see. At daybreak, we found falcons on the NML roof, where none had been perched the night before. They often had full crops, or were just finishing a quail they had managed to remove from the hack board.

On at least six nights in August, we saw the peregrines flying at night. The Wisconsin Natural Gas Company Building (Gas Co.), across the street from the NML, has

many ledges and was a favored roosting place for the falcons both day and night. From dusk to midnight, spotlights mounted on the ledges point up against the brick walls, illuminating the building. As we left the NML after resupplying the hack boards, we could see as many as six peregrines at a time circling the Gas Co., chasing each other and darting about rather recklessly, lit from below by the spotlights.

We first found cached, night-killed prey on the "411" roof the morning of 8 September. Each night thereafter, we removed all prey remains before leaving the building. Each morning, before first light, we returned and found the bodies of birds that the falcons had cached on the 411, NML, and Gas Co. buildings. The falcons fed on these cached birds during the day, ignoring the quail on the hack boards. From 8-16 September we found a total of 38 Yellow-billed Cuckoos (*Coccyzus americanus*), one Black-billed Cuckoo (*C. erythrophthalmus*), and one Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*), with a maximum of 13 birds on 13 September. Many of the cached birds had their bodies "raked" open or had their heads removed, both consistent with peregrine kills.

On 17 September, the weather changed abruptly from warm, sunny, and breezy, to cool and rainy for 1 wk. We found few new kills, and the falcons once again ate the quail we provided. Once the weather cleared after 22 September, the falcons stopped relying on the quail on a daily basis. We found an average of 1-2 new kills per day, and saw the falcons retrieving cached food from other buildings. By 29 September, all the falcons had stopped using the hack board and we closed the site for the season. Ten of the young falcons survived to independence; the other four were killed or crippled within 1 wk of release.

The falcons' increased hunting proficiency apparently corresponded with an influx of cuckoos into the area. The city lights probably encouraged the nocturnal hunting; D.M. Bird (pers. comm.) has seen American Kestrels (*F. sparverius*) hunting large, flying insects at night under the lights of Montreal's Olympic Stadium. It is possible that wild peregrines also take night-migrating birds, particularly when the moon is full.

RESUMEN.—Halcones Peregrinos (*Falco peregrinus*) jóvenes, que fueron sueltos en Milwaukee, Wisconsin en 1987, estuvieron activos y cazaron durante la noche. Desde el 8 al 16 de septiembre, encontramos 38 cuclillos de la especie *Coccyzus americanus*, 1 de la especie *C. erythrophthalmus*, y 1 picogordo de la especie *Pheucticus ludovicianus*, que habían sido cazados en la noche; con un máximo de 13 aves el día 13 de septiembre. Muchas de las aves capturadas tenían los cuerpos abiertos y decapitados, lo que es consistente en las víctimas de Halcones Peregrinos.

[Traducción de Eudoxio Paredes-Ruiz]

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